1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

142
302
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V. Julian Linder at Brownville

[Following p. xxxii-E]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

142
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XIVb. The Andersons' granddaughter at Possum Point

[Following p. xxxii-0]

OLD FORT

787 Nuttn ebuh happen tuh me widout me knowin it long fo it come." 22a, e

•301 75 (115) Another old woman * can recall when her slave mother used to carry her on her back to the spring on their plantation. This woman wears large earrings of gold which she has worn since her mother pierced her ears in childhood. Each wrist is encircled by a band of copper wire. She smiled and inadvertently touched the wire as she explained its presence.

"Ef yuh wuks hahd aw does much washin, it heps duh nerbes." 8, 12

754 At the mention of "cunjuh" the old woman lit her pipe, smiled pathetically, and shook her head. As the blue smoke curled upward, she told of having been conjured and of how it had changed her whole life in a few short weeks.

"Yeahs ago," she sighed, "I hab a huzbun wut treat me well an uh wuz libin good. Dis wuz jis fo muh twins wuz bawn. Ise a twin too, an it sho is bad luck.[67] Deah wuz somebody wut want muh huzbun tuh leab me an go off wid um, so dey hab me fix.[15] Wen uh come home one day, I step in a hole by duh doe an deah wuz a bottle fix wid some tings in it. Right den an deah I took sech a misery in muh lef side an den uh swell up all obuh; muh hands wuz twice deah size.[8, 12, 15] I stay dataway till I fine out wut tuh do. Den I sprinkle black peppuh an potash in duh hole weah duh bottle wuz an it bile up. Den some friens wash me off in wiskey ebry day an soon uh wuz all right.[6] But wen duh twins wuz bawn duh boy twin hab a lill hole right in is lef side weah I hab duh misery frum duh fixin. He lib nine days fo he die."

(845)

"But the person did not succeed in getting your husband after all, did she?" we asked.

"Yes'm but she sho did. Whoeb'h fix me fix muh huzbun too, cuz he go off an leab me an I know he ain nebuh done dat lessn he bin fix. Muh son die wen he wuz twenty-tree an

* *Dye Williams, Old Fort.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

"Witches done ride me plenty times.[69] I spicioned who dey wuz but nebuh could ketch one. Dey alluz tun out tuh be somebody right in yuh neighbuhhood. Yuh kin keep em away by puttin sulphuh roun yuh house aw by placin a knife aw a Bible unduh yuh pilluh.

"Deah's lots uh strange tings dat happen. I seen folks disappeah right fo muh eyes. Jis go right out uh sight. Dey do say dat people brought frum Africa in slabery times could disappeah an fly right back tuh Africa. Frum duh tings I see mysef I blieb dat dey could do dis."

Ozie Cohen * said that he too saw the spirits of people just before they were about to die.[59a] He told us, "Not long ago a frien uh mine wuz sick. Duh night befo he die I see his spirit floatin long befo me in duh street. Duh nex day he pass away. Eben aftuh some uh muh friens die, I see deah spirits nuff tuh know em.[56]

"Hags worry me too. I see um slide in frum noweah. I try tuh call out, den all at once I'm hepless an strugglin.[69] Ef I membuh tuh put a Bible unduh muh pilluh, dey dohn bodduh me.

"I hab heahd duh story bout folks flyin back tuh Africa. I tink it mus be true wen I tink bout how witches kin come tru a keyhole tuhday.[69c]

"Yuh heah lots bout roots an fixin.[15] Folks is alluz sayin somebody bin rooted mos anytime somebody git sick fuh a long spell. Den yuh heah dem sayin, duh sickness ain feah. Dey bin rooted."

Down one long lane and up another we came upon the two or three-room dwelling of the second mayor, George Boddison,** built on the banks of the old rice canal. Boddison came out of his home to meet us. His wrists and arms were encircled by copper wire strung with good luck charms; * his fingers were covered with several large plain rings. A cop-

* *Ozie Cohen, Tin City.*
** *George Boddison, Tin City.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

per wire was bound around his head and attached to this wire were two broken bits of mirror which, lying flat against his temples with the reflecting side out, flashed and glittered when he moved his head.

"Yes, Ise duh mayuh," he admitted. He was reluctant to talk of what he termed "mysterious tings uh duh elements." But after a few minutes' conversation, he told us that he believed there was "sumpm" to certain beliefs and superstitions.

"I hab a deep suspicious mine dat way muhsef. I know deah is luck an unluck an some people kin wuk it. It's a science in mos ebryting dey does. Dey kin swap yuh frum good luck place tuh bad luck place." [15]

"Has anyone tried to harm you?"

"Yes, dat dey hab." He smiled at this, and we saw that a brass ring had been inserted in his mouth in the place of a lower jaw tooth. "Some days I feel lak uh jis caahn make it. It seem lak sumpm hab a holt on me an uh caahn wuk. Den I know strong currents is directed tuh do me ebil. If dey res on me, uh would be sick, maybe die. But deze dat I weahs," indicating the copper wire, the mirrors, and the other charms, "keeps all deze tings frum huttn me. Duh ebil caahn dwell on me. It hab tuh pass on.[12a, c, d]

"Many tings kin be done tuh cause people hahm aw make em disability," he went on. "Dis is wut I hab confidence in. A pusson kin take sech as a cat aw dog aw a lizud, sech creatures as libin. Dey kin kill dis animal an dey hab some way tuh cause its spirit tuh be ebil. Dis spirit moobs on currents tuh somebody duh pusson do not lak an is so powuhful dat it cause eben duh flesh tuh rot.[5]

"So I weahs deze," he ended. "Long as I weahs em deah is nuttn kin do me reel hahm." [8]

When we thanked him, he did not smile but only bowed his head. To the end of the interview he kept his dignified and serious demeanor.

DRUMS AND SHADOWS

754 Her age was uncertain; she was gaunt and sickly in ap-
115 pearance. Her outfit consisted of a dull gray waist with a
[291] turban to match and a faded blue skirt. Large brass ear-
[301] rings dangled from her ears, making her lean face appear still more woebegone. Certainly there was something wrong with the woman, for she dragged listlessly with the effort of walking the short distance from the house.

We inquired about her health but when we asked about the "cunjuh" which had been put upon her, she looked at us distrustfully, saying, "Muh huzbun tell yuh bout dat." With that she left us abruptly.

[291] Soon the man * appeared, a bent figure in ragged blue overalls, with a battered felt hat on his grizzled head. Unlike his wife, Stephen Bryant was talkative and friendly, and he told us readily of his wife's strange predicament. "She
754 wuz cunjuhed by uh own sistuh," he began. "Some days
[593] she all right an kin cook an clean up; den all at once tings git tuh runnin all obuh uh body.[5] Sometimes she fall down an hab tuh be put tuh bed."

We asked Stephen if he had consulted any root doctors [48] about his wife's condition and he said, "I hab monuh dozen root doctuhs tuh uh but dey dohn do uh no good. I keep on tryin an maybe some day I fine duh right un tuh reach duh cunjuh."

In this instance retribution seemed to have come swiftly, for Stephen told us that the sister who had caused the conjure was now "laid up uhsef wid cunjuh, fuh someone cas a spell on huh too."

787 When we asked Stephen if he believed in evil spirits, he
775 nodded in affirmation. "I sees um all duh time," he said.
776 "Dey is lill an wite an hab no head.[54, 55] Yuh nebuh see um till attuh duh sun gone down. Yuh dohn bodduh um none an dey leab yuh lone.

"Deah use tuh be a ole house right pas ours. Ebry night

* *Stephen Bryant, Springfield.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 Lunnon * remembered a great deal about the old customs. Seated in his front yard under the shade of a crepe myrtle tree, he and Prince Sneed were chatting. Lunnon's hair was
• [304] snow white and wooly. On his left ear was a gold earring,
[151] which he claimed tended to improve his eyesight.[37] When he laughed he bent double and slapped his knees with his hands; at the same time his mouth opened wide, revealing his three remaining teeth. At first he was reluctant to admit that he
115 had heard much about conjuring. He finally admitted, be-
754 tween chuckles, that he had heard about it from his mother and grandmother but vehemently denied any belief in conjure himself. He was serious, however, as he told the following story about Prince Sneed's father-in-law, who was being conjured at the time.

754 "I lib in White Bluff fuh bout fifty yeahs, an I kin tell yuh many stories I heahd bout cunjuhin an root doctuhs. Somebody heahbouts put an ebil spell on Prince Sneed's fathuh-in-law, Lunnon Milton.[38] He seem tuh git wus an wus an nuttn seem tuh hep him none. Finally he sen fuh a
[759] root doctuh an he wuk obuh im but he dohn git no bettuh.[48] He call in eight ub um altuhgedduh, but dey dohn seem able tuh countuhrack dat cunjuh.[6] Duh ole man sick tuh dis day. Maybe some day he fine a root doctuh wut is powful nuff tuh hep him." [48]

115 As Uncle Lunnon finished his story, Prince Sneed,** a dark man of splendid physique despite his sixty-odd years,
[758] added, "It's lak dis. Wen Ise sick, I gonuh see a doctuh
[759] right away. Now muh faduh-in-law, he jis keep on wid dem root doctuhs, but he say he ain gittin a bit bettuh."

Prince proved to be an interesting talker, much of his knowledge having been gleaned from conversations by the fireside with his grandfather. The following narrative was still fresh in his memory:

* *London Grayson, White Bluff. Deceased November, 1939.*
** *Prince Sneed, White Bluff.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

533 202 [115] Another native of Skidaway,* now living in Sandfly, also remembered drum codes being sent out from Skidaway.[26] A member of the Baptist Church, he has never heard drums beaten in the house of praise, but he described with great pride and earnestness the ceremony of a river baptism.

795 796 "We gadduh at duh chuch wid duh candidates who comes all dressed ready fuh baptism in long wite robes. Duh deacons range duh folks in line, two by two. Den duh mahch tuh duh ribbuh begin, duh pastuh an duh deacons leadin duh way. Dis is a solemn time, an duh candidates an deah friens an relatives all rejoice. As we mahch we sing. Some uh duh [533] songs we sing is *I'm Gwine Down tuh duh Ribbuh ub Jawdan* an *Oh, Who Will Come an Go Wid Me?*

"Wen we git tuh duh ribbuh some uh duh folks is so happy an dey scream an jump roun so much dat some uh duh udduhs hab tuh hole em. Duh candidates is led intuh duh watuh, one by one, an baptize. Attuh duh baptizin dey change deah cloze an we all go tuh duh chuch fuh duh communion services."

754 •301 789 [777] Here, as in many other sections, a silver coin is frequently worn on the ankle to insure good luck[8] and to give warning by turning black at any effort by an enemy to conjure the wearer.[12a, c, d] In regard to this custom of wearing a coin one woman who is married to a man "wid duh powuh tuh see tings"[22a,*] said, "Duh folks roun yuh use tuh weah five dolluh gole pieces on deah ankle, but hahd times jis nachly make dem gole pieces jump off."**

The same woman told that when she and her husband first moved to Sandfly several years ago, a neighbor employed a conjure man to put a spell on them to drive them away.

"I membuh wen deze folks cross duh way wuz cunjuhin us, an strikin roun, I went tuh duh sto an change a dolluh bill fuh one of deze silvuh dolluhs. It wuz roun an shiny as yuh

* *John Bivens, Baker's Crossing.*
** *Lee Baynes, Sandfly.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

please. I carry it in muh pocketbook an duh nex day it tun black an I know fuh sho dey wuz tryin tuh cunjuh us."[15]

Repeated efforts were made to conjure the newcomers. At first bottles filled with a queer oily substance were buried around the house. When these failed in effect a more powerful charm was compounded, and a few days later the intended victim discovered buried in her back yard what she described as "a bottle neck down in duh groun. It wuz filled wid some kine of funny lookin oil."

"I know dis wuz a cunjuh," she said. "I call muh huzbun an show it tuh im. He git plenty mad an say he gonuh settle mattuhs once and fuh all wid dis cunjuh man. He wait fuh im by duh lane an wen he come long, he grab im an shake im an tell im he know all bout wut he bin doin. He tell im he bettuh stop tryin tuh cunjuh us, fuh he know bout cunjuh his ownsef an he tell im all duh tings dat he done. Wen duh cunjuh man heah dis, he fall down on is knees an beg muh huzbun tuh fuhgib im. He tell im bout all sawts uh magic dat he wukd on udduh folks in duh neighbuhood. He promise not tuh do no mo uh dis an muh huzbun let im go."

We were told of another woman who, as a result of conjure,[15] fell mysteriously ill and felt snakes running up and down her left side under the skin.[5, 80] Medical care did not help the case and she is now, according to report, "jis wastin away an no one caahn do nuttn."*

Graveyard dirt is often employed in the making of conjure bags.[8, 9] If possible this must be taken from the grave of a murdered person and some money must be left in exchange. Not very long ago when a man was arrested for murder, his friends, wishing to save him, went to the grave of the murdered man, secured some dirt, and left three pennies on the grave. A man, lingering in the vicinity, stole the money and shortly thereafter spent it in the neighborhood

* *Lee Baynes, Sandfly.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

tuh be plenty keahful bout duh spirits. Duh spirit is hungry jis lak duh pusson. Yuh hab tuh put food in duh ruhm fuh duh spirit tuh come eat." [58]

"Dat is duh truth," agreed young Elizabeth. "Ef duh spirit is hungry, it will sho come back an hant yuh." [58f]

This talk of spirits started us on a new train of thought and we were curious to learn of the local theories regarding ghosts and witches.

"Duh spirit nebuh go in duh groun wid duh body," [56] volunteered Emma. "It jis wanduh roun. Dey come out wen duh moon is noo."

Mary Stevens,* whose short, stocky figure was clad in bright pink and who wore a sailor hat perched rakishly on her head, stated, "Duh spirits is ebryweah. Dey peah mosly at duh fus dahk an in duh middle night."

Young Elizabeth, too, had something to say about spirits. "I sees em all duh time," she said. "Dey dohn hurt yuh none, jis walk long wid yuh an talk. Some hab duh head on an some hab duh head off." [59a]

From ghosts and shadows of the night the discussion followed its natural course to even darker powers, such as conjure, evil roots, and counter charms. The little group glanced slyly at one another. It was in lowered tones that they volunteered remarks on this subject.

"We do heah bout folks rootin each udduh all duh time.[15] Yuh sho hab tuh be keahful. Some folks weahs a dime aw a penny tied on duh ankle an wen it tun black, dey knows somebody is tryin tuh root em." [12a, c, d]

"What are the conjures made of?" we wanted to know.

"Dey make em uh haiah an nails an frum lots uh tings," we were told.[10]

Elizabeth said, "Duh heabiest root I ebuh heard bout wuz a cunjuh made uh some funny oily stuff in a bottle. Duh enemy ketch duh pusson's spirit in dat bottle an dat wuz a

* *Mary Stevens, Sunbury.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

759 aw sizzuhs tuh cut the pain. Once wen I wuz in pain a mid-
755 wife put a peah of sizzuhs unduh muh pilluh. All of a sudden the pain stop right quick. The pain wuz cut right off." 12b

115 Josephine Stephens,* one of the older residents of the island, lived a short distance from Liza Basden. Her house was set back several hundred yards from the highway in the midst of a large field. There was no pathway and in order to get to the house we had to cut directly through the field. As we neared the gate at the front of the house a tall gaunt woman, who we learned was Josephine's daughter, ran to meet us. It appeared that the mother had been ill for some time past and the younger woman had been caring for her.

As we talked with Josephine, the daughter stood in an adjoining room, ironing clothes. She stopped every now and then to take part in the conversation. The two women were utterly different types. Josephine, dressed becomingly in (291) a blue and white checked gingham outfit, was the antebellum type of Negro. The daughter, tall, thin and dashing, and probably in her forties, represented a more modern era. She had on a blue checked sport shirt, a white skirt upon the surface of which was the dim outline of the trade name of a flour mill, and a pair of shiny black satin bedroom slippers. Her two front teeth were gold and shone and sparkled as she talked. Two large gold hoop earrings dangled beneath her • (301) close cropped straightened hair.

"I bin wukin ovuh at St. Simon," she explained to us. "Befo that I had a good job up Nawth. My mothuh git sick tho, an she need me tuh take keah of huh. That's why I come heah an stay. She gittin tuh be long in yeahs an caahn do so well by uhsef."

The mother did not know exactly how old she was but said she had been about fourteen at the close of the War between the States. We questioned her about her recollections of

* *Josephine Stephens, Harris Neck.*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

chastised me for not keeping an extra bottle of her medicine with me. Then she got up calmly, took her kerosene lamp, went out in the field behind her house, dug up some kind of root, brought it back, washed it, and boiled it. When the tea from the root had cooled, she took my wheezing daughter into her lap and coaxed her into drinking a cup of the reddish liquid. Twenty minutes later my daughter lay asleep and breathing peacefully on her lap.

In the fall of 1982 Miss Myma's trailer caught fire from her kerosene lamp and burned. Fortunately, she was not injured in the fire. She went to live with a relative whom she had raised as her daughter and who lived only a few doors away. Miss Myma is well into her eighties now. Her daughter told me that her mind wanders from time to time and that she has a tendency to wander off physically from home. In fact, she strayed down to the creek and was lost overnight at one point. A rescue squad was called in, but she was not found until the next morning when a helicopter pilot spotted her sitting out in the open field just beyond the creek banks. She was alert and did not suffer as much as a cold from the dampness and exposure. When I saw her most recently in the spring of 1985, she was sitting under the Angel Oak, a little nip in one hand to warm her blood, a crabbing stick in the other. She was smiling faintly and waving goodbye to me as I headed down the lane. She looked as if she were waiting for just the right moment to slip off down to the creek and nab a crab or catch a mullet "for sho."

Ida Mae is different from most of the women on the Sea Islands, very different. After having five children out of wedlock, and becoming a grandmother four times over by the time she was thirty-nine, she told me she had given up trying to be respectable in that community.

Ida Mae was an attractive woman when I met her in 1973. She had nut brown skin and flashing white teeth accented by a gold tooth that glistened in the sun when she laughed. She had the kind of face that was designed for the close-cut, boyish afro that she kept edged to perfection. Her light hazel eyes—"devil eyes," the islanders called them—were offset by her rich, dark color and gave the appearance of jumping out at you. She liked her eyes and said they were one of the reasons that she had had the gold tooth put in. In fact, when she first got it, she said, she used to practice smiling and turning her head just so the light would touch on her eyes, her tooth, and the large fourteen-karat gold hoop earrings that one of her men friends had given her. She

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

142
291
301
516

[p. 44]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

142
291
301

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585

Mrs. Mary Pinckney

IT'S TOUGH TO RAISE FIVE CHILDREN—SURE IS

I get married to the church. And I had the reception in Robbie Fields' store. They had wine and piccolo playing, and dancing. I danced once. But I couldn't dance 'cause my dress was too long. Long white dress, white shoes and white veil 'cross my hair. Lot of people came to the church and lot of people at the store. They had as much in the yard as was in the store, couldn't come in. I guess 'round about three hundred head. Big wedding.

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We was young children, growing up together. I met him long time ago, but I didn't realize that was to be my husband today. I remember he was picking the potato on the farm and I had to go work that morning and he

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

[p. 127]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Maggie Russell

ANYBODY WANTS TO GO BACK TO THEIR OLD HOMEPLACE

159 You see that house through the bushes? That's Jenkins Point, where I used to live. They had houses built on the plantation for black people to live in because that was the people that worked for them. Now there are no black people living over there on Seabrook.

I married Dan Russell in 1944 and moved out to Wadmalaw. My husband was a crabber. We worked in the creek thirteen years together. I loved it.

You're not going to get onto Seabrook now. We tried to go in a boat one time and a man was standing up on the bank and shoots. He shoot up in the air. I say, "Dan, it sounds like somebody shooting." He say, "Cut the motor off." We cut the motor off and he was shooting up in the air telling us not to come over there. Then we see the sign says "no trespassing at any time." You can't even go in the little creek we used to go in to catch fish. He closed that out.

It's too bad because anybody wants to go back to their old homeplace.

142
302
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

142
291
301
302
416

Mrs. Ethel Grimball

THAT IS GREAT PROGRESS

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When I walk on Johns Island and I stand in the yard and look at the nursing home, look at the lab, look at the clinic, and look across the street at the housing project, I feel like that is great progress. I'm sure that the low cost housing project added ten to twenty years to the life span of a lot of those people who live there because of the living conditions they had prior to that. They feel comfortable, they feel more secure, and they feel good about themselves. And then if anyone gets sick or doesn't feel well, all they have to do is walk across the street to the clinic. And that is great progress.

There's a fight right now to keep it going, because of political reasons, but it's still great progress. That was one of the things my father spoke about—the health care on these islands. I wish he were here to see it.*

*Mrs. Grimball is the daughter of Esau Jenkins.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-S (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

1429
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[p. 224]

4: Caravan & Caravan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

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Mr. William Saunders

CULTURE IS AN INBRED THING, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE FED

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I think the culture has a better chance to survive if you have some control over it. That has been my dream to try to make sure people have an economic base, and then you can go back, then you can sit around and talk about parents and grandparents. But if somebody is sitting around hungry and you're gonna tell them about some damn culture, it don't make any American sense.

So what it is that some of us have been about is you can upgrade peoples' health care, you can upgrade their housing, if you can upgrade their education, then they themselves begin to look at their own history, because they have some leisure time to look at it.

Culture is an inbred thing, it's in there, but it needs to be fed. The best way to feed it is to make sure you got some of the basic necessities to survive.